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The Interesting Side of the Chicago Socialist Row

Comrade Walsh: I went up to see Edwards about the cartoons (those already used), and while my reception was frosty, no violence ensued, and he promised to take the matter up with you direct. I have not been able to see Comrade Freyer as yet.

In regard to Knocke, as an editor I think he would make a good one, but think you had better get further information on the subject, as I would, perhaps, be a poor judge.

Now, as yet, the smoke of the battle here has not cleared away, and a complete statement is out of the question at present, but I will try and give you the facts up to date, and you can glean the present state of affairs from them. I am sending you at this time a copy of the Omaha statement, and an address by Teller county locals, which together will give you an exact quota of the state of affairs here at present, as regarded in a broad fundamental way, sheared of technicalities.

Further as to the foundation or the statement by the other side that we are anarchists, it has some grounds to stand on, as follows: Some of our side have made the statement that they did not believe in "political action"; they meant that they did not believe the co-operative commonwealth would be brought about by votes alone, but that when we had a majority of votes, we would then have to use the police powers of the government, so acquired, to take possession, as indicated, by the majority vote, and they missed the point, made clear in the manifesto, that this is political action, and that as they favored this line of action, they were not anarchists, as the other side claimed they were; as they had misstated their own position. There were only a few who fell into this error, and the other side took it up, and made capital out of a quibble of words.

The real fight began when the other side found themselves in a majority at a county central committee meeting. They passed a motion suspending the regular order of business in order to take up the national platform.

There was a committee out to draft a new platform, to be presented with the old one, for the rank and file, at a mass meeting called for that purpose. They decided that it was wrong for the Cook county central committee to have monkeyed with the platform question, and at that time were about to vote, when the split occurred.

It has been a standing rule of the Cook county committee to con-

vene at two and adjourn at six, and the other side claimed that this rule was done away with when they suspended the regular order of business. At six o'clock the secretary held the gavel on an appeal, from the chair on a minor matter, and at six he let the gavel fall, and declared the meeting adjourned as per rule, and our delegates left the hall.

Thomas J. Morgan took forcible possession of the minutes, and reconvened the meeting, and as our man had left, the opposition after six o'clock proceeded to change the call for the mass meeting, making it one to indorse the national platform, and fired the platform committee, business manager of the Chicago Socialist, county treasurer and county secretary, and filled the positions with their own men, some of whom were not eligible on constitutional points. They appointed a committee to take possession of the office, etc., but our men got there first and took party seal, papers, etc.

Then matters hung fire until the mass meeting, which they packed with German singing societies, and had a prizefighter as door tender, who made us show our books, but who let in any one vouched for by the opposite side whether party members or not. The most bitter feeling was shown in speeches; they were armed and gavel rule prevailed; they did not permit our new platform to be presented and 85 of us voted against their resolutions; we were, of course, in the minority. Then at the next meeting of the ward branches came two sets of minutes from the two county secretaries, and we were informed if we did not accept theirs, that by that act we placed ourselves outside the party. They had the branches packed with "sleepers" who had not been to a meeting for months and months and carried most of the wards. Their object was to capture the county convention, which they did, and there passed a reform county platform, which was made to look like 30 cents by the one the democrats passed a short time later. At our county convention we were branded as anarchists, disruptionists, etc.; anything, in fact, but Socialists.

They had expelled or suspended or reorganized those branches that did not accept their minutes and this denied the 28th ward representation, and the 21st, and unseated some delegates who had been suspended from the party under charges.

Many of us resigned from the party, proposing to fight on other lines, to be decided on later, and they expelled seven and suspended

one, dropping the charges against the rest.

Then came the state committee fight, which involved the national office and the quorum. In this fight we were clear constitutionally, but they decided against us on "general principles," but we were down and out, as the Chicago Socialist is closed to us and the referendum denied us, we formed the revolutionary, Socialist, educational society, with the constitution of a political party, and any time we change our name, we can become such at once.

As soon as our statement to the public is out I will send you one, which will be more complete and accurate than the foregoing, and their side you can get from the Chicago Socialist of a few weeks ago; you must have seen it.

Now, history is still being made, and a few days ago we got proof of what we had long suspected, that Morgan was a police agent. Some S. L. P. men were holding a street meeting, when they were arrested, and their permits taken away. Morgan and Steadman appeared to prosecute, but when they found it was not our bunch, they abjectly apologized and said "you ain't the fellows we are after," and said they would see that the permits were returned, which they were.

The S. L. P. men went to the city hall to see what was what, and were shown a letter of a dictatorial nature, in the extreme, ordering the chief of police to see that all outstanding permits were taken up, and the owners arrested if talking for Socialism, unless they were O. K'd by the men who sent the letter—Morgan, Steadman and Edwards. Morgan was largely responsible for the hanging of those men in '87, and events prior to that time were just like they are now, so if some day you read of a bunch of us looking through a rope circle, you will know something about it.

These men here can never be part of the Socialist party with us, because they have unmasked, and we can't therefore work for the Socialist party movement in this city, unless the other states line up and throw down the platform, when with the "sleepers" gone back to their holes, we may work in again and use the axe, as they have shown us how. This is all for this time, as I don't like writing and am played out.

I trust I have given you the facts, that is the main thing.

Yours truly,

Chicago, Ill., June 27, 1904.

H. L. SIGGINS.

Local Omaha's Stand

On the National Socialist Platform Adopted At Chicago, May 6, 1904

It may be said that the good features of the platform offset the objectionable ones and therefore we should overlook the bad for the good that is in it. If the platform committee gave us a pig and we find after the porker comes into our possession that he is owned by a colony of cholera microbes, surely for the few sound spots in his anatomy they wouldn't ask us to keep him to please the parasites that inhabit him; neither are we going to adopt a middle class platform to extend the life of a class of leeches because it condescends to mention the fact that the working class is the only class that has a right to be.

Therefore, in stating our position upon the platform adopted at the Chicago convention, we wish to do so from behind a barricade of historic facts. As in military science, soldiers are taught the strategic positions over which to throw their battalions, so in the war of words, if we hope to win the battle, we must marshal our phalanx of facts and logic in such a way as will shatter into fragments every opposing force and opposition.

The writers and defenders of the platform declare it to be the first American expression of the class struggle. We hold it to have completely blurred the lines of class division, to have set aside the Socialist philosophy for literary diction and brilliancy of style, and in so doing abrogated the science which alone explains the laws which brought these delegates together, we claim they have resurrected from the grave the middle class philosophy of individualism, to which the organized growth of industry had consigned it, and with the effrontery born of a training in the schools of respectability, parade this spectre before our eyes under the guise of Socialism.

"The Socialist party, in convention assembled, makes its appeal to the American people as the defender and preserver of the idea of liberty and self government in which the nation was born."

The American people, the defender and preserver of the idea of liberty!

In the light of history, members of the platform committee, what does this mean to the working class? Is the materialistic conception meaningless to you? Have the "ideas of each age" ceased to be "the ideas of its ruling class?" If it has become meaningless to you, say so. If not, why mock us with your sentimental hypocrisy about the preservers and defenders of liberty when these ideas of liberty as well as morality and justice but reflect the economic interests of our masters. Liberty, beside being "something sweet to the palate of the flesh," is a relative term, like pleasure, which is only a relief from pain, find expression in its opposite, slavery. Hence the struggle of a class in its own interest means liberty for that class. No struggle of a class which is not waged in its own interests, though it may think so, is a struggle for liberty. The ideas which dominate it have fallen from above.

The revolutionary struggle of the American colonies for independence was economic in character and was waged entirely in the interest of the manufacturing and commercial classes. When England chartered the colonies, she intended them to follow agricultural pursuits; being herself a great manufacturing nation; she desired the colonies to furnish the raw material for the same, but she reckoned without her host; the colonies soon became her rival, having developed in less than two hundred years an annual export and import trade of \$40,000,000. These figures are based upon the report of 1790. As the colonies produced more than the home market could consume, they radiated out into the world's market. This brought them into competition with the British capitalists, who, alarmed at their new rival, went to their home government and demanded the enactment of laws repressing the rising manufacturing industries of the colonies; act after act was passed against the manufacturing interest of the colonies.

Act 5, George II, CXXII, was passed in 1731 at the instigation of the wardens and assistants of the company of felt-makers of London, to prevent the inhabitants of the American colonies from exporting hats of their own manufacture to any place whatsoever.

In 1750 a law was enacted declaring the iron industry of Pennsylvania a public nuisance. Following these laws came the navigation acts, sugar acts, tax against molasses, which crippled the rum industry, the principle commodity used in the slave traffic; then came the stamp act and the tax upon tea. These repressive laws aroused the manufacturing interests of the colonies. The Boston Gazette of April 29th, 1765, has this to say: "Whose natural right is infringed by the erection of an American windmill, or the occupation of a water mill on a man's own land, provided he does not flood his neighbors. A colonist cannot make a button, a horse shoe, or hob nail, but some sooty iron monger or respectable button maker of Britain shall bawl and squall, that his honors worship is most egregiously maltreated, injured, cheated and robbed by the rascally American republicans." At the same time that these acts were being passed, repressing the manufacturing interests of the colonies, Great Britain, according to Bolles, was giving bounties to encourage the agricultural industry; thus showing that the conflict going on was not between the agricultural interests and the British government, but between the manufacturing and commercial classes of the colonies and the British capitalists.

This attack of the home government upon the manufacturing and commercial interests of the colonies brought these several little states for mutual protection together in 1774 in the continental congress. Here it was resolved in the name of liberty and of property to boycott English made goods. They met again in 1775, and finally in 1776 the "immortal declaration" was penned. Then followed the years of sanguinary strife, the peace treaty and the institutions of America came into being in the name of liberty. Liberty for whom? Not for the black slave of the south; certainly not for the white redemptioners of the north, but liberty for the master class of America to go on their way unhampered by the British government; in other words, liberty meant free trade, not only in merchandise, but in human flesh and blood.

Our class, whether black or white, were not considered by the founders of "our" institutions, and the platform that hurls such nonsense broadcast not only insults our intelligence, but outrages the memory of the victims degraded by them. "Our institutions" of liberty were called into being by the exigency of a mixed association of slave-driving agriculturists and labor fleeing capitalists. In 1776, when the world was fired with the torch of liberty sent flaming from Philadelphia by its authors declaring that the inalienable rights of man to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness was a sacred heritage, hundreds of thousands of our class were groaning under the yoke of the slave driver. Thousands of the white workers of Europe were being purchased by the ship load by the class whose interests brought the revolution. Thousands were being sold into bondage for debt, or placed in dungeons for the same offense; apprentices were enslaved to pay the obligations of absconding masters. The Boston News Letter in 1718 states that in the previous year there had been eighty burials of Indians and negroes in Boston. This loss, estimated on basis of thirty pounds, amounted to 2,400 pounds. If white servants had been employed instead at fifteen pounds for the time of each, the town had saved 1,200 pounds. A man could procure 12 to 15 pounds to purchase the time of a white servant, that could not pay 30 to 50 pounds for a negro or Indian. The white strengthen and people the country, others do not." The foregoing quotations tell you in what estimation your class was held by the ruling class of the colonies. It tells you also that Boston owned white vassals as well as negro and Indian slaves. Indentured servants, says Weeden, page 695, Vol. II, were a constant factor in the social system. "They were coming into the country under one or another form of service. In 1746 Robert Galton advertises in Boston, with various goods, a few boy servants indentured for seven years, and girls for four years. In 1750 a number of Irish servants are to be sold; the men are mechanics, the women fit for either town or country. Unexpired service under indenture was offered for sale like any other article of value."

Washington, the father of his country, says Hart, many years after 1750, writes to an agent inquiring about buying a shipload of Germans. The treatment of these redemptioners was as heartless as that meted out to the slaves. "The courts whipped, imprisoned and fined erring servants." The fine imposed and his board during confinement was paid by his master. The victim, if not able to pay this upon his release from prison, which of course he never was, his master was given the privilege of selling him to any English plantation. By an act passed by Rhode Island in 1645 runaway servants are to be returned to the colonies from which they escaped. Under these conditions we can readily see how impossible it was for the redemptioner to hope to be other than a life long slave.

This great body of the population, in company with numbers of free laborers, were denied the rights of citizenship under the constitution of the several states that formed the American republic. Property qualifications was the basis of the elective franchise, also for the holding of office. Out of a population of 200,000 inhabitants in Connecticut, in 1775, only 4,335 were voters; thus showing that more than 30,000 of her male population of voting age were disfranchised. Connecticut had no other constitution than her colonial charter until 1818; Delaware, in 1831, abolished religious and property qualification, except the paying of taxes; Virginia had a property qualification for voting until 1830; South Carolina's constitution of 1790 provided that a freehold of five hundred acres and ten negroes, or a real estate valued at a hundred and fifty pounds sterling, free from incumbrance, was a necessary qualification for voting; Maryland had a property qualification for voting and office holding until 1810. In 1821 New York abolished the freehold qualification and substituted requisites of taxation, service in the militia or fireman. The latter part of the eighteenth century found Vermont without a property qualification; Rhode Island had her colonial charter until 1842. Dr. Jameson states in the New England Magazine for the month of January, 1890, that in Massachusetts, from 1780-89 inclusive, only sixteen per cent of the male inhabitants over twenty-one years of age were entitled to vote, while but three per cent actually voted. Bradford, in his history of Massachusetts, page 349, gives a draft of a constitution agreed upon by the convention of the state of Massachusetts Bay held February 28th, 1778. Under section 3 of this constitution no person is qualified to hold the office of governor unless he is possessed in his own right of a five thousand dollar estate within the state; the lieutenant governor shall possess \$2,500, \$1,250 to be in real estate. An estate of \$2,000, \$1,000 to be in real estate in the state and an estate of \$1,000 divided in the same way shall qualify a man to hold the office of senator or representative. Section 5 of the same document makes \$300 over and above all charges the qualification for voting for the afore named officials. Massachusetts in 1820 abolished freehold or property qualification for voting. An ordinance for the government for the territory of the United States, northwest of the Ohio river, enacted in congress July 13th, 1787, provides that representatives must hold in their own right, in fee simple, 200 acres of land within that territory; that a freehold in fifty acres shall be requisite for voting. It also provides that a member of the council of five appointed by congress shall be possessed of a freehold in five hundred acres of land.

These historic facts lay bare all of the Yankee gush about American liberty and portrays the conditions of our class under those glorious free institutions. Like their black brothers, the white laborers, without voice or vote, were never deemed part or parcel of the people; they had no part in the affairs except to fight the battles of the commercial and agricultural classes. The public opinion of those days, as now, was not of their making; the liberty of the colonies and the institutions that arose upon the soil of its realization were to them only means of exploitation. As a class they were still in their swaddling clothes. The conditions necessary to bring them to their feet had not yet arrived, but the elements were at work. The industrial

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